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**Subject:** FYI - Point Reyes plan continues seaside cattle, culls elk

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## NATIONAL PARKS

### Point Reyes plan continues seaside cattle, culls elk

Jennifer Yachnin, E&E News reporter

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Cows graze inside Point Reyes National Seashore. Chuck Grimmett/Flickr

The National Park Service endorsed a proposal that would allow cattle ranches to continue operations at Point Reyes National Seashore near San Francisco while culling the tule elk herds in the area.

The agency outlined the plans yesterday along with five other options in a new draft environmental impact statement. Environmentalists sued NPS in 2016 over concerns that 20 historical ranching and dairy operations at the seashore contribute to coastline erosion, damage wildflowers and threaten elk herds in the area, and a settlement required the agency to review its general management plan for the site (Greenwire, March 14, 2016).

While the NPS proposals include options that would reduce or eliminate ranching on the seashore, the agency endorsed an option to create a new 28,700-acre "Ranchland zone," replacing the special-use pastoral lands and pastoral landscape management zones established under the 1980 management plan. The new proposal also incorporates 7,600 acres for ranching that are not part of the existing pastoral lands.

The preferred alternative would also allow leases or permits of up to 20-year terms for existing ranches to continue beef and dairy operations.

Congressional lawmakers have shown support for the ranches, which existed before the seashore became a park unit in 1962 (E&E News PM, Feb. 14).

But environmentalists slammed the preferred management plan, pointing to NPS's proposal to reduce the Drakes Beach herd of tule elk to 120 animals via "lethal removal methods" and to haze the animals off 18,000 acres of parkland.

"This is a shockingly anti-wildlife plan and killing these elk will do nothing to fix or reduce the environmental damage caused by cattle ranching," Jeff Miller, a senior conservation advocate for the Center for Biological Diversity, said in a statement, noting the herd currently includes 124 animals.

He continued: "What is the Park Service thinking? Allowing expansion of commercial agricultural activities would inevitably lead to further conflicts with other native wildlife. After the elk shooting starts, get ready for ranchers to call for the slaughter of the park's bobcats, foxes and birds."

But park Superintendent Cicely Muldoon defended the continued dual use of the site. She asserted that the preferred plan protects threatened and endangered species while also safeguarding natural and cultural resources.

"Point Reyes has a good story to tell. Threatened and endangered species, and a rich diversity of wildlife have thrived at Point Reyes National Seashore. And so has ranching. The history of preserving Marin's incredible open spaces is intertwined with ranchlands. The two things come together here in Point Reyes unlike any other national park," Muldoon said. "It can work, and indeed has worked together for more than 50 years. Of course it's complicated, and of course we can do better. In the end, the park will be better protected if we can find common ground — whatever perspectives people come from on this issue, everyone cares about this place. Our preferred alternative sustains the free ranging elk herd, and protects our ranching heritage."

Muldoon also noted that while the proposed management plan would allow the introduction of sheep, goats and chickens, it would not permit management of predators related to those species. However, guard animals including dogs, donkeys and llamas would be permitted.

<https://www.eenews.net/greenwire/2019/08/09/stories/1060897529>

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